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PROSPECTUS

OF A

COURSE OF LECTURES,

TO BE DELIVERED EVERY

MONDAY, WEDNESDAY, AND

FRIDAY,

DURING THE ENSUING LENT.

IN STRICT CONFORMITY WITH THE RESTRICTIONS OF

MR. PITT'S CONVENTION ACT.

By JOHN THELWALL. K

It is not the part of a good Citizen to violate, from *individual caprice* the provisions of a *general Law*; but it is his duty to embrace every opportunity which the Legislature has not prohibited, of promoting principles conducive to the happiness of mankind.

L O N D O N:

Feb. 2, 1796.

Sold at the Lecture Room, Beaufort-Buildings; at SYMONDS's, Paternoster-Row; EATON's, Newgate-Street; and SMITH's, Portsmouth-Street.

[PRICE SIXPENCE.]

PROSPECTUS

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3s. 6d.



MONDAY

HURD & THE ENGLISH LITERATURE

THOUGH I have given this little pamphlet the title of a Prospectus, it is not my intention, neither is it at this instant in my power, to present the reader with an analysis of the subjects to be treated, and the arrangement to be pursued. If my lectures were to be delivered to a small and select class of students this might perhaps be both proper and requisite; but to be enabled to proceed would require more elaborate preparation than I believe, consistent with the attempt to deliver a popular course of lectures.

There are persons, I am aware, who are of a different opinion; and who suppose that the correct philosophy, and measured harmony of period, which it is perhaps impossible uniformly to combine in extempore elocution, give a decided preference to the written over the spontaneous oration.

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But the arguments on the other side appear to me to have superior weight; and this speculative opinion has been equally confirmed, not only by general observation, but by the specimens produced by its opponents, and my own individual experience. It may perhaps be true, (though of this I am far from being convinced) that when correctness and animation are combined, that which is most delightful in the closet will also be most satisfactory "in theatres and halls of assembly." But where is the man who can give to the delivery of written eloquence the ease, the fire, and the variety of extempore effusion? and where the English audience (cold and phlegmatic as we are said to be) which would deem the most classical precision, and the utmost elegance of language, sufficient compensations for the absence of these attractive qualities?

Allured by the variety of the characters, the splendor of the embellishments, the interest of the narrative, and the strong emotions of passion which dramatic representations so frequently inspire, we flock, it is true, to the theatre, and listen again and again, with increasing rapture, to the sentiments of our immortal bard. But how comes it that, with all these advantages, we cannot endure, upon the stage, even a speech of forty lines? that many of the most beautiful passages of *Shakespeare* have been

of necessity curtailed? and that, notwithstanding all the embellishments of the most harmonious rhyme, and the varied sweetness of versification, the fine odes in *Mason's Elfrida* tire the ear? The truth is, that, in speeches of any length, it is impossible for the reciter to avoid that measured cadence, that formal coldness and monotony, which is the consequence of speaking from the head, instead of yielding to the impulse of the heart. Add to which, that the grand charm of oral eloquence consists not only in the correspondence of the tone of voice with the subject matter, but in that powerful harmony of feature and gesticulation—that electric animation of the eye, which, varying its expression with every transition of rising passion, prepares the minds of the audience for the sentiments about to be delivered, and anticipates the impressions those sentiments are intended to inspire. But in the *recital* of a long speech this effect is never, I believe, produced to any eminent degree; on the contrary, even in the most successful experiments that I have witnessed, the eye is every now and then turned inward, as it were, to search the memory for some epithet or expression which has partially escaped. The gesticulation and utterance become accordingly embarrassed; and the consequence is, that, although the auditors in general may not discover the cause of their disgust,

attention flags, and the vivid impressions inspired by genuine animation fail to be produced. Nay, so complete, in my judgment, appear the advantages of spontaneous delivery, that if, after having agreed upon the plot and fable, and delineated a correct outline of the business of each respective scene, it were possible to collect a sufficient number of actors of real genius, to enter into the different passions, and sustain a characteristic and unwritten dialogue, I cannot but suspect that the impressions produced, even from the stage itself, would be so much more vivid and delightful, that the written drama would go out of fashion, and *Shakespeare* himself be transferred from the stage to the closet.

But whether this conjecture be extravagant or no, with respect to the drama, I can have no sort of doubt as to the superiority of spontaneous delivery in these cases, where the orator is to appear in his own character, to give utterance to the genuine sentiments of his own mind, and the real passions of his soul. I have tried various experiments; and I dwell the more particularly upon this subject, because, if my experience, in this respect, is of any value, I wish others, who may tread in the same path, to be benefited by it. I have read from printed books, and commented as I went on. I have written my lectures, and read them. I have

got them by heart, as it is called, and recited them. I have sometimes drawn out my materials into an elaborate *lyabus*, and sometimes merely devoted the last quarter of an hour or twenty minutes before I attended the tribune, to the arrangement of such ideas as I had collected together by previous contemplation and research. Nay, some of my most popular, and, what was less to have been expected, some of my most *methodical* lectures, (where the subject from frequent meditation had become familiar to my mind,) have been delivered without so much as a single note, or any kind of formal preparation.

Of this last, however, is an experiment rather to be apologized for than recommended. It is troubling too much to the animal spirits and accidents of the moment. It exposes the orator to the greatest of all dangers—that of being too easily satisfied with his own exertions; and if he does not use the precaution of having his speeches taken down, that he may contemplate his defects at leisure, the frequent repetition of this practice will infallibly prevent him from attaining any considerable degree of excellence.

The plan I propose, and that which, during the last season, in particular, from finding it most successful, I have principally followed, is to sketch the lecture the day before, or on the day in which

is to be delivered; and to be copious or sparing in the preparatory notes, according to the nature of the subject. When the argument principally turns upon calculations and historical facts, that require minute accuracy of statement, or chronological order, the skeleton cannot well be too elaborately made; in other words, the subject cannot be too methodically arranged, nor the references too strongly marked. But, when general principles are to be discussed, provided they have been previously well digested by the lecturer, and the mind is well stored with the necessary ideas, the outline indeed should be so far sketched as to secure a regular connection to the discourse, but the shortest and least elaborate preparation is always the best.

In both cases the clothing and embellishments ought to be left to the time of delivery: for that language will always be most emphatic, which the warmth of the moment supplies (provided the orator habituate himself to *correct*, and occasionally *elaborate*, composition in his closet); and those tropes and metaphors will always be most fascinating, which, springing spontaneously from the collision of passion and fancy, are sketched, perhaps, with a *rude*, but with a strong outline, and exhibit, in glowing colors, the heat and rapidity of their conception.

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Lectur-

Such being the plan I intend to pursue in the delivery of these Lectures, it is evident that this prospectus cannot go much into detail with respect to the subjects to be treated on the respective nights: neither do I believe that it is desirable, in any point of view, that this should be done, any farther than is necessary to remove the apprehensions of the public as to the penalties of a late Act of Parliament, entitled "An Act for the more effectually preventing Seditious Meetings and Assemblies."

Certain clauses of that Act having threatened the infliction of severe penalties, not only upon any person who shall deliver, but upon those, also, who, under certain circumstances, shall attend the delivery of Lectures of a particular description, therein specified, it becomes necessary, if I would avoid the mortification of talking to the empty benches, that I should clearly demonstrate to the public, that the Lectures I am about to deliver do not come within the description of the Act of Parliament, and that consequently, both the Lecturer and the Auditors will, in this respect, be precisely in the same situation as though no such Act had ever been adopted by the Legislature.

In order to place this in the clearest point of view, I shall, in the first place, quote so much of the Act of Parliament as relates to the subject of public

Lectur-

Lecturing and Debating; and afterwards, by contrasting together what it is that is *prohibited*, and what it is that I am about to do, I shall prove beyond all question, that although I cannot, under the restrictions of this law, deliver again the Lectures which I have already delivered, I can, nevertheless, *securely, prudently, and legally*, deliver those which I am about to propose; and that the Auditors will be in no more danger of fine or prosecution for attending them, than the pupils at a course of chemical lectures, or the frequenters of a parish church or methodist chapel.

The part of the statute which relates to the present subject begins at the bottom of the seventh page of the copy PRINTED BY ORDER OF THE HOUSE, 4th Dec. 1795; and in page 25 of Symonds's Abstracts.* The subject thus begins at the twelfth clause.

" And whereas certain houses, rooms, or places, within
 " the cities of London and Westminster, and in the neighbourhood thereof, and in other places, have of late been
 " frequently used for the purpose of delivering lectures
 " and discourses on and concerning supposed public grievances, and matters relating to the laws, constitution, and

* Symonds's Abstracts of the Two Bills, &c. To which are added, The Bill of Rights, the Coronation Oath, and Magna Charta. The very associations in this pamphlet cannot fail of recommending it to general attention.

" yours

ing and debating on and concerning the same, and under
 pretence thereof lectures or discourses have been deli-
 vered, and debates held, tending to stir up hatred and
 contempt of his Majesty's royal person, and of the govern-
 ment and constitution of this realm, as by law established:
 Be it therefore enacted, by the authority aforesaid, That
 every house, room, field, or other place where lectures
 or discourses shall be delivered, or public debates shall
 be held, on or concerning any supposed public grievance,
 or any matters relating to the laws, constitution, govern-
 ment, or policy of THESE KINGDOMS, for the purpose
 of raising or collecting money, or any other valuable
 thing, from the persons admitted, whether such house,
 room, field, or place, shall be opened or used for any
 such purpose alone, or for any such purpose together
 with any other purpose, or under whatever pretence the
 same shall be opened or used, to which any person shall
 be admitted by the payment of money, or by tickets
 sold for money, or in consequence of his paying or giv-
 ing, or having paid or given, or agreeing thereafter to
 pay or give, in any manner, any money or other thing
 for or in respect of his admission into such house, room,
 field, or place, unless the opening or using of such house,
 room, field, or place, shall have been previously licensed
 in manner herein-after mentioned, shall be deemed a
 disorderly house or place, and the person by whom such
 house, room, field, or place shall be opened or used for
 the purpose aforesaid, shall forfeit the sum of one hun-
 dred pounds for every day or time that such house,
 room, field, or place, shall be opened or used as aforesaid,

" to such person as will sue for the same, and be otherwise
 " punished as the law directs in cases of disorderly houses;
 " and every person managing or conducting the proceed-
 " ings, or acting as moderator, president, or chairman, at
 " such house, room, field, or place, or therein debating, or
 " delivering any discourse or lecture for the purpose afore-
 " said, and also every person who shall pay, give, collect, or
 " receive, or agree to pay, give, collect, or receive, any
 " money or other thing, for or in respect of the admission
 " of any person into any *such* house, room, field, or place,
 " or shall deliver out, distribute, or receive, any such ticket
 " or tickets as aforesaid, knowing *such* house, room, field,
 " or place, to be *opened or used for such purpose*, shall for
 " every such offence forfeit the sum of one hundred pounds
 " to such person as will sue for the same.

" And be it further enacted by the authority afore-
 " said, That any person who shall at any time here-
 " after appear, act, or behave him or herself as master or
 " mistress, or as the person having the command, govern-
 " ment, or management, of any *such* house, room, field,
 " or place as aforesaid, shall be deemed and taken to be a
 " person by whom the same is *opened or used as aforesaid*,
 " and shall be liable to be sued or prosecuted, and punished
 " as such, notwithstanding he or she be not, in fact, the real
 " owner or occupier thereof.

" And be it further enacted by the authority aforesaid,
 " That it shall be lawful for any justice or justices of the
 " peace, or chief magistrate respectively, of any county, city,
 " borough, or place, who shall, by information upon oath,
 " have reason to suspect that any house, room, field, or place,
 " or any parts or part thereof, are or is *opened or used for the*
 " purpose

" purpose of delivering lectures or discourses, or for public
 " debate, CONTRARY TO THE PROVISIONS OF THIS
 " ACT, to go to such house, room, or place, and demand to be
 " admitted therein; and in case such justice or justices, or
 " other magistrate, shall be refused admittance to such
 " house, room, field, or place, or any part thereof, the same
 " shall be deemed a disorderly house or place, within the
 " intent and meaning of this act; and all and every the
 " provisions herein before contained respecting any house,
 " room, field, or place, herein before declared to be a dis-
 " orderly house or place, shall be applied to such house,
 " room, field, or place, where such admittance shall have
 " been refused as aforesaid, and every person refusing such
 " admittance shall forfeit the sum of one hundred pounds to
 " any person who shall sue for the same.

" Provided always, and be it enacted by the authority
 " aforesaid, that it shall be lawful for any justice or justices
 " of the peace, or chief magistrate respectively, of any
 " county, city, borough, or place, where any such house,
 " room, or other building, shall be licensed as aforesaid, to
 " go to such house, room, or building so licensed, at the
 " time of delivering any such lecture or discourse therein as
 " aforesaid, or at the time appointed for delivering any such
 " lecture or discourse, and demand to be admitted therein;
 " and in case such justice or justices, or other magistrate,
 " shall be refused admittance to such house, room, or build-
 " ing, the same shall be deemed, notwithstanding any such
 " licence as aforesaid, a disorderly house or place, within the
 " meaning of this act; and all and every the provisions
 " herein before contained respecting any house, room, field,
 " or place, herein before declared to be a disorderly house

“ or place, shall be applied to such house, room, or build-
 “ ing, so licensed as aforesaid, where such admittance shall
 “ have been refused as aforesaid; and every person refusing
 “ such admittance shall forfeit the sum of one hundred
 “ pounds to any person who will sue for the same.

“ Provided nevertheless, that it shall be lawful for two
 “ or more justices of the peace of the county, city, town,
 “ or place, where any house, room, or other building shall
 “ be, which any person shall be desirous to open for *any of*
 “ *the purposes aforesaid*, by writing under their hands and
 “ seals, at their general quarter session of the peace, or at
 “ any special session to be held for that particular purpose, to
 “ grant a licence to any person or persons desiring the same,
 “ to open such house, room, or other building, for the pur-
 “ pose of delivering for money *any such lectures or discourses*
 “ *as aforesaid, on any of the subjects aforesaid*, the same be-
 “ ing clearly expressed in such licence, for which licence a
 “ fee of one shilling, and no more, shall be paid, and the
 “ same shall be in force for the space of one year, and no
 “ longer, or for any less space of time, therein to be speci-
 “ fied; and which licence it shall be lawful for the justices
 “ of the same county, city, town, or place, at any general
 “ quarter session of the peace, to revoke and declare void
 “ and no longer in force by any order of such justices, a
 “ copy whereof shall be delivered to or served upon the
 “ person to whom the said licence so revoked shall have been
 “ granted, or shall be left at the house, room, or building,
 “ for which such licence shall have been granted, and there-
 “ upon such licence shall cease and determine, and be hence-
 “ forth utterly void and of no effect.”

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The above clauses, together with one relating merely to the manner in which the informer is to sue for the penalty, and some provisions in behalf of the Universities and public schools, contain all that relates to the subject of Lectures and Debating Societies. The provisions relative to numbers, requisitions to magistrates, power of dispersion, and the like, in the earlier parts of the act, relate purely and simply to meetings "holden for the purpose, or on the pretext, of considering of, or PREPARING ANY PETITION, COMPLAINT, REMONSTRANCE, OR DECLARATION, OR OTHER ADDRESS, TO THE KING, OR TO BOTH HOUSES, OR EITHER HOUSE OF PARLIAMENT, FOR ALTERATION OF MATTERS ESTABLISHED IN CHURCH OR STATE:" as will be evident to every one who discharges the duty he owes to himself and his country by an attentive perusal of this very extraordinary statute. With respect to Lectures and Debates, it is matter of no consequence whether they are attended by ten people, or ten thousand; and what would be illegal in the latter case would be equally so in the former.

It is essential, however, to mark with some degree of accuracy what it is, and what it is not, that is forbidden by this act: for although it is not the part of a good citizen to violate, from the dictates

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of individual caprice, the provisions of a general law, (whatever may be his opinion of the government by which it was made) it is certainly the duty of every friend of Liberty to neglect no opportunity which the Legislature has not prohibited of promoting those principles which he believes to be conducive to the general happiness of mankind. In short, nothing (except intemperate violence) can be so injurious to the public cause, as that cringing timidity with which we so frequently meet Oppression, as it were, half way; and when a part of our rights is violently taken from us, forbear, with what is miscalled prudential caution, to exercise even those that remain. This is, in reality, courting slavery. It is saying to the Minister, You have over-rated the courage, spirit, and intelligence of the nation. Your invasions of public liberty are too tame and cautious. You were fearful lest the present burthen should be intolerable; but our necks are formed for a heavier yoke; and though there are bounds to your presumption, there shall be none to our servility: take, therefore, as our gift, the little liberty you had left us, and let us become ENTIRELY THE THING YOU WISH us, though you had not the courage to attempt to make us so. If this should be the conduct of my countrymen, with respect to these Bills, at least they shall not have to reproach me for the example.

ple: *I will not, in my present disposition at least, violate the Law; but I will continue to obey the dictates of my own conscience, and promote the important cause of popular discussion in such ways as the Law has not yet forbidden; and perhaps it will be found upon serious consideration, that the field is yet ample, and the harvest promising.*

(*It will be seen, at first sight, and indeed it was observed during the discussion of the subject in Parliament, that even such lectures as I have formerly delivered might be repeated under this act, provided the auditors were neither admitted by the payment of money, or by purchased tickets: and, if I were so disposed, I believe it would be no difficult matter to evade this part of the Act. But I will submit to no subterfuge. That which I do, I will do openly. I have not been educated in that school where men learn to reject with disdain the salary to which they are entitled from their employers, and compensate themselves for this sacrifice to their independence by the wholesale plunder of their country. But though I am too little enamoured of the character of a swindler to imitate the practice of obtaining money under false pretences, it is, on the other hand, undoubtedly my intention, in an open and manly way, to reap an emolument from my exertions. And this, I believe, is nothing more than justice: for although in occasional sa-*

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crifices to the public cause, when the exigencies of the times demand them, I hope I shall never be backward, yet I confess that my patriotism is not pure enough to comprehend the *disinterested logic* of the Attorney General and Chancellor of the Exchequer, that "it is disgraceful and immoral to receive emolument from our public labour."

He who would deliver a course of lectures worthy of the public attention, must direct his whole time and faculties to the subject. And as it is neither in my power nor my inclination to devote myself to so arduous an undertaking without the prospect of remuneration, the *subjects* of my lectures must be so selected as not to fall within the description of the act. Nor will this create much difficulty: for whether the framers of this Bill found it impossible to invent pretences for totally abolishing all discussion on the principles of government and the important facts of history, or whether they were startled at the idea of restoring entirely the night of gothic ignorance, certain it is, that though much is prohibited, there is much of considerable importance which can still be legally done.

If the reader will be kind enough to return to the foregoing quotation, and attend to the passages printed in *Italics*, he will find that the things complained of in this act, are "Lectures and Dis-

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"courses on and concerning supposed public grievances, and matters relating to the laws, constitution, and government and policy of *these kingdoms*;" that the "houses, rooms, fields, or other places," thereby subjected to licence, or metamorphosed into "disorderly houses or places," are those in which *such* lectures or discourses are delivered; and that the persons threatened thereby with fine and penalty are those (and *those only*) who deliver such discourses, or pay for, or are assistant to, the delivery of such lectures, discourses, or debates, "on or concerning such supposed grievances, or matters relating to the laws, constitution, government or policy of *these kingdoms*." And though to persons unused to the tedious formality of legal composition, (one of whose characteristic attributes it is to fatigue attention with verbose tautologies, till the disgusted mind can no longer pursue the meaning) the expression "or under whatever pretence *the same* shall be opened or used," may, at first blush, appear somewhat more general and comprehensive, yet, upon the slightest examination, it will be found that the words *such* and *the same*, marked in the quotation with asterisks, (*) uniformly refer to the previous description—that is to say, to "houses, &c. where lectures shall be given on supposed public grievances, or matters relating to the laws, &c. of

"THESE KINGDOMS." It follows therefore of course that, with respect to all other subjects, the right of public lecturing, and the freedom of popular discussion, stand precisely where they did before Mr. Pitt's Sedition Bill, passed into a Law. All therefore, that the lecturer or the debater is enjoined by this Act of Parliament, is to avoid all mention of this country, its grievances, its laws, constitution, government, and policy; and provided he does this (which most assuredly I shall) he may discuss the principles of Liberty and Justice, and expose all the vices and horrors of Tyranny and Usurpation. The corruption of Rotten Boroughmongers he must no longer expose; nor may he argue upon the necessity of parliamentary reform. But the treasures of antiquity still lay open before him. Still may he expatiate on the energies of Grecian freedom, dwell with glowing rapture on the wisdom and virtue of the Republics of elder times, and trace, with instructive eloquence, the causes of the growing majesty of ancient Rome, and the degeneracy, luxury, and venality, which destroyed its liberties, and undermined its empire.

Locke, Sydney, and Harrington are put to silence, and *Barlowe, Paine, and Callendar* it may be almost High Treason to consult; but *Socrates* and *Plato, Tully* and *Demosthenes*, may be eloquent in

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the same cause. A sentence from *Rapin* might condemn the orator to a penalty of one hundred pounds; but he may expatiate with impunity on facts recorded by *Xenophon* and *Thucydides*, and may dwell upon the histories of *Livy* and *Polybius*, of *Sallust*, *Pacitus*, and *Suetonius*, till every heart beats high in the cause of Liberty, and Tyranny and Corruption stand revealed in all their horrors. Nay, if modern story invite him with more attractive charms, the orator is still at liberty to discuss even the subject of the *French Revolution*, and expatiate on the advantages and the errors of that memorable event.

Such being the ample range which is still indulged to the faculties of *Britons*, it is evident that the difficulty is not so much how to find a subject for the exercise of their eloquence, as how to choose from such a wide variety.

If popular attraction were alone to be considered, the election would immediately be made. There can be no doubt that, at this time, the very name of the *French Revolution* would inspire the most general interest. But I have reason to believe that there are other subjects which will be more instructive; and though I shall occasionally illustrate my discourses with all such facts and references as are not forbidden by this act, that is to say, with whatever does not "relate to the laws,

" constitution, government or policy of *these* king-
 " *doms*," I have determined, for a variety of rea-
 sons, to take for the foundation of my lectures,
 the important events of Roman History.

The classical scholar will immediately perceive,
 and, if I am able to do any thing like justice to my
 theme, the public will soon be convinced, what a
 magnificent variety of the most interesting subjects
 this plan lays open to investigation. Perhaps there
 is hardly an individual topic, important for the
 cause of Liberty, which might not be embraced in
 such a course of lectures; and with this advantage,
 that it is impossible for calumny and party malice
 to represent such disquisitions as inflammatory or
 seditious; since rightly to understand the history
 of the ancient world, and to elucidate the principles
 of Grecian and Roman policy, has ever been re-
 garded, not only as admissible, but as praise-worthy,
 by all the *regular* governments of Europe. Even
 the old despotism of France, never discouraged
 investigations of this kind; and VERTOT, MON-
 TEsQUEU, and several of the most distinguished
 writers who flourished under the tyranny of the
 BOURBONS, derived a considerable portion not
 only of their reputation with the people, but of
 countenance and patronage among the great, by
 enquiries of a similar description. In short, it is
 scarcely possible to conceive, among nations in any
 one degree

degree enlightened, a despotism so jealous and ferocious as to prohibit the study of general history; or the investigation of the facts and principles connected with the governments of the ancient world.

Certain it is, that this act of parliament proceeds to no such despotic lengths, and that the subjects I have chosen can be treated with the same freedom as before the recent alterations had taken place in the constitutional law of the land. The only operation of the bill in this respect will be, that the magistrates of the district will have a right to receive a little insight into the facts and principles of ancient history, without paying for their admittance: a clause of which my old friend REEVES, and my kind neighbour EDWARDS, will not, I hope, neglect to take advantage!

The power of the magistrates in this respect will, however, be no greater over my lecture-room, than it is, at this moment, over every room, house, or tenement throughout the nation; for the reader will perceive, by turning to the *third* of the before recited clauses, (p. 10.) that "any justice of the peace, &c. who shall, by information upon oath, have reason to suspect that any house, &c. is used for the purpose of delivering lectures, &c. contrary to the provisions of this act," is authorised to go to such house, and demand admittance: "and

“and in case such justice, &c. shall be refused admittance, the house is to be deemed a disorderly house,” and every person refusing such admittance is to forfeit one hundred pounds.

Among the novelties of this Bill, certainly not the least remarkable is this of *suspicion upon oath*. It is in reality arming the magistrate with an arbitrary right of harrassing whomsoever he pleases with all the vexatious tyranny of *domiciliary visits*. Do you wish to perplex your virtuous neighbour, to gratify private animosity, or indulge your political rancour—do you wish to disturb his peaceful slumbers, to terrify a pregnant wife into convulsions, or to alarm with perhaps mortal fears a sister or daughter, languishing on the painful bed of disease?—do you have nothing to do but to hasten to some litigious magistrate, and (secure in the self-evident proposition that *AFFIDAVIT OF SUSPICION IS LIABLE TO NO PROSECUTION FOR PERJURY*) swear that you *suspect*, or swear something that will *authorize him to suspect* (and who shall answer upon what grounds a litigious magistrate, and such there are, may *choose to suspect*) that a company are assembled to hear lectures or discourses, “contrary to the provisions of this act,” and such magistrate is authorised to proceed immediately to the house, without further ceremony, demand admittance, ransack the premises, and fill every apartment with dis-

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may be the hour of day or night whatever it will—no matter—his *suspicion* is his warrant of authority; and if he is refused admittance, every person so refusing him is to be fined 100*l*. and subjected to all the disgraceful penalties incurred by keeping a disorderly house.

But this clause, so tremendously formidable to the security of domestic peace, is of no sort of consequence with respect to my lectures. In a private family the very circumstance of the abrupt appearance of a magistrate is of the most alarming nature; and terrors and apprehensions are, with respect to the female part of such family, the almost inevitable consequence. But in a room open to all comers, where a crowded audience are assembled, either for instruction or entertainment, a magistrate is a guest no more formidable than any other person; especially when, as in this case, he is vested with no other authority than to sit down *silently*, and listen to what goes forward. And that this is the case there needs no further evidence than the perusal of the clauses previously quoted, and of this specific clause in particular. He may listen to the lecture, indeed, without paying for it; and if it were of the description prohibited by the act of parliament, he might, like any other informer, bring his action for the 100*l*. penalty.

But the premises, and all every apartment with them.

But he has, in this case, no discretionary power of dispersion or interruption.

Having thus shewn that the Lectures I am about to deliver, namely,

LECTURES ON CLASSICAL HISTORY,
do not come within the descriptions of the Act of Parliament, and consequently that they will neither require a licence, be open to legal interruption, nor subject either the lecturer or the audience to fines and penalties, it only remains to say a few words relative to their purposed duration and the terms of admission.

With respect to the former of these, repeated experiments have convinced me that incessant exertions of this kind, periodically continued through a whole winter, are more than a constitution like mine can bear. My first course of lectures, begun in November 1793, and continued without interruption for more than five months, reduced me to a feeble skeleton, and might perhaps have terminated in a decline, if the minister, anxious to preserve me from such a catastrophe, had not provided for the restoration of my health, by a *country lodging, in the Tower*. My second commenced on the 6th of February, 1795, and closed on the 12th of June: and such was the emaciation and injury to my lungs, in particular, which the exertions of this course

course produced, that a retirement of between two and three months, in the most delightful, and most salubrious part of the country, was inadequate to my perfect restoration. In the midst of sickness, and the calls of other duties, of the utmost importance, I believe, to the public cause, I have since delivered a still more elaborate course, which kept the mind perpetually at full stretch till the passing of the two bills cut the string, and relaxed for a while the almost broken bow.

From these reiterated shocks my constitution is yet but imperfectly restored; and for the deductions which a repetition of such efforts must occasion, both from the enjoyments and the duration of life, no degree of *private emolument* can atone. Nothing, therefore, but the pressure of the most extraordinary *public duties* can call upon an individual for such incessant labour; and I have accordingly determined that my seasons for lecturing shall from henceforth be shorter, and my vacations longer. The present course will consist of no more than twenty lectures, which, commencing on the 10th of February, and being continued every Monday, Wednesday, and Friday, till the 25th of March, including the whole season of Lent, will be comprised within the space of seven weeks: after which it is not my intention to lecture any

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more till autumn, when, in all probability, a course of similar duration will be delivered.

This alteration of my plan subjects me to the necessity of another; which (though with the candid part of mankind it will require no apology) I shall briefly explain, to obviate the cavils of those who seem to suppose that they have a right to dictate the price at which others shall dispose of their talents and exertions. The fact is, that, at the time of my emancipation from Newgate, those friends who reflected upon what I had suffered, and were conscious of the incumbrances which persecution must have heaped upon me, almost unanimously advised me to advance the price of admission to my lectures: a circumstance which, if there were no other reason, would be justified on the single foundation of that enormous increase in the price of every article of comfort and necessity, which makes it the duty of every individual (whether he labour with his head or his hands) to demand a proportionate increase in the wages of his industry!

My attachment to the laborious classes of society, and my desire of not precluding them from the means of political information, disposed me to reject this advice. Experience, however, has convinced me that I was wrong. The frequenters of my lectures, with very few exceptions, have
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been generally of that description to whom it can be matter of little consequence whether they pay a *shilling* or a *shilling* for their evening's entertainment.

But the most important circumstance is, that the price of admission furnished the minister with one of his strongest arguments for suppressing the lectures; for although H. E., who never opens his mouth without swallowing thousands of the public money, treated it as part of my *crime* that I made a livelihood of my politics (or, as he was pleased to call it, of my *sedition*), yet the argument most acceptable to the prejudices of those in whose hands all power of legislation rests, was, that the lecture-room was frequented only by the lowest orders of society, and the lectures (of course) were mere faragoes of inflammation and sedition, which none but what they contemptuously call the most ignorant and dangerous of mankind could be expected to attend: an argument which, though, even upon their own ideas, destitute of all foundation, in point of fact, derived plausibility from mere external evidence.

But I have another reason for increasing the price of admittance, which must have been decisive of itself—namely, that the whole receipts of two such short courses as those to which I find it necessary to confine my annual exertions, would, at

the former price of admillion, scarcely pay the enormous rent of my premises, and the very heavy expences which inevitably attend these lectures. I have formerly stated these expences at four hundred a year. Upon more accurate calculation I find them to have exceeded that sum. And though my two last courses have freed me from embarrassments, and, what is of considerable consequence to a studious man, have in some degree enlarged my library; yet, upon winding up my accounts, I find that I very considerably overshot the mark when I said, in my last lecture, that I should retire with 130 or 140*l.* in my pocket.

Casual observers first exaggerate the receipts, and then set down all for profit. They will be surprised to hear that my carpenter's bill for enlarging and fitting up my lecture room amounted to above ninety pounds; and that the little improvements, &c. which I have thought necessary for the ensuing season, and the many expensive books indispensibly requisite for such a course as I am about to give, together with advertisements and other expences, will have cost me between fifty and sixty guineas before my doors are thrown open to admit an auditor.

I have said thus much to preclude the cavils of those who, when they can find no other ground of condemnation, would fain accuse me of getting too much money by my labours. I do not mean,

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however, to relinquish the principle, which it would not be very consistent in any advocate of Liberty to deny; that, where the purchase is optional, every man has an inherent right to fix a price upon his own exertions.

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